



**Substitute House Bill No. 6685**

**Special Act No. 13-24**

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY LEGAL DISPUTES INVOLVING THE CARE AND CUSTODY OF MINOR CHILDREN.**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established a task force to study (1) the role of a guardian ad litem and the attorney for a minor child in any action involving parenting responsibilities and the custody and care of a child, (2) the extent of noncompliance with the provisions of subdivision (6) of subsection (c) of section 46b-56 of the general statutes and the role of the court in enforcing compliance with said subdivision, and (3) whether the state should adopt a presumption that shared custody is in the best interest of a minor child in any action involving the custody, care and upbringing of a child. Such study shall include, but not be limited to, an examination of state statutes applicable to an action involving the custody, care and upbringing of a child, and the costs associated with contested divorce actions, including, but not limited to, expert witness fees and attorneys' fees including the fees of guardians ad litem and attorneys for the minor children. Such study may include recommendations for legislation on matters studied by the task force.

(b) The task force shall consist of the following members:

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(1) One appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives, who shall be a practicing attorney with significant experience in the handling of child custody matters in state courts;

(2) One appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate, who shall be a practicing attorney with not less than ten years' experience serving as a guardian ad litem or an attorney for the minor child in child custody matters in state courts;

(3) One appointed by the majority leader of the House of Representatives, who shall be a licensed mental health professional with expertise in child custody forensic evaluations;

(4) One appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, who shall be an employee of the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Department;

(5) One appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives, who shall be a mental health professional with expertise in working with family systems;

(6) One appointed by the minority leader of the Senate, who shall have personal or professional experience in matters involving allegations of one parent engaging in a persistent pattern of denigrating the other parent in the presence of a minor child in order to negatively influence the child's perception of the parent and alienate the child's affections for the parent, made in the context of a proceeding involving the custody, care and upbringing of a minor child;

(7) Two jointly appointed by the chairpersons of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the judiciary, one of whom shall be a member of said joint standing committee, and one of whom shall be a practicing attorney with significant experience in the ethical obligations involving child

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custody cases; and

(8) Two jointly appointed by the chairpersons of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children, one of whom shall be a member of said joint standing committee.

(c) Any member of the task force appointed under subdivisions (1) to (8), inclusive, of subsection (b) of this section may be a member of the General Assembly.

(d) All appointments to the task force shall be made not later than thirty days after the effective date of this section. Any vacancy shall be filled by the appointing authority.

(e) The speaker of the House of Representatives and the president pro tempore of the Senate shall select the chairpersons of the task force from among the members of the task force. Such chairpersons shall schedule the first meeting of the task force, which shall be held not later than forty-five days after the effective date of this section.

(f) The administrative staff of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the judiciary shall serve as administrative staff of the task force.

(g) Not later than February 1, 2014, the task force shall submit a report on its findings and recommendations to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the judiciary, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes. The task force shall terminate on the date that it submits such report or February 1, 2014, whichever is later.

Approved July 12, 2013